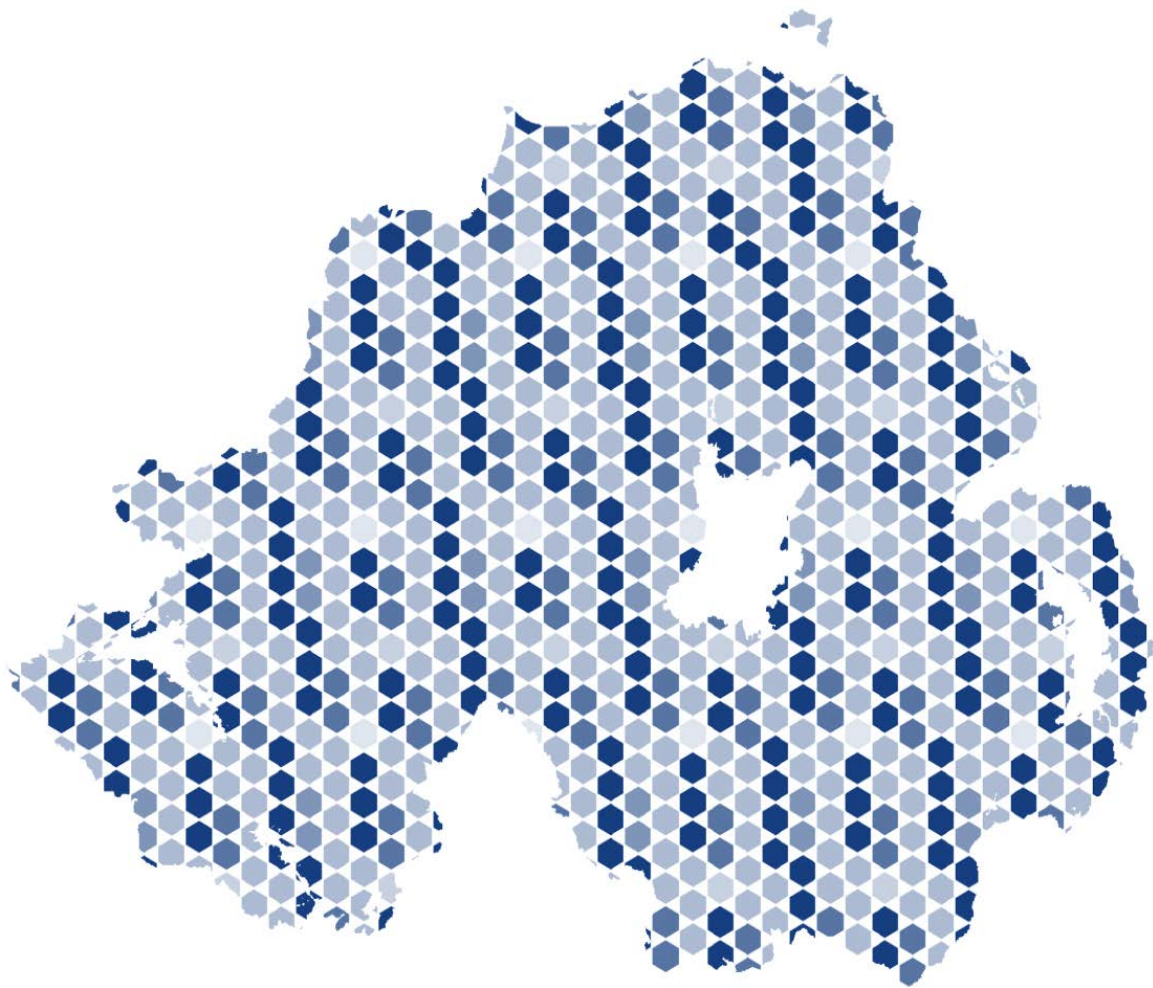


POST-PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training
Inspectorate

Friends' School, Lisburn

Co-educational, 11-18, voluntary grammar school

Report of an Inspection in
February 2014

eti
The Education and Training Inspectorate -
Promoting Improvement

Providing Inspection Services for

Department of Education
Department for Employment and Learning
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure



Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) use the following performance levels in reports:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

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1. Inspection method and evidence base

The key questions and quality indicators which guide inspection and self-evaluation of post-primary schools, which were applied to this inspection, are available in the ETI publication *Together Towards Improvement: a process for self evaluation* at: <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/together-towards-improvement/together-towards-improvement-post-primary.htm>.

Inspectors observed teaching and learning, scrutinised documentation and the pupils' written work and held formal and informal discussions with pupils, teachers and staff with specific responsibilities.

The arrangements for this inspection included:

- a meeting with representatives from the governors;
- meetings with groups of pupils; and
- the opportunity for the parents, teaching and support staff to complete a confidential questionnaire.

Data on the returns on questionnaires sent in advance of the inspection to parents and school staff is shown in the table below.

Questionnaire	Number issued	Number returned	Percentage returned	Number with comments
Parents	771	92	12 (¹)	51
Teachers	63	45	71	13
Support Staff	25	6	24	*

* fewer than 5

2. Context

Friends' School is situated in Lisburn drawing pupils from a wide geographical area. The school is regularly over-subscribed; upon entry to the school most of the intake achieve above the expected level in English and in mathematics.

Friends' School Lisburn	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Year 8 Intake	142	141	143	143
Enrolment	981	983	989	988
% Attendance (NI Average)	97.2 (92.6)	97.2 (93)	96.2 (92.9)	
FSME Percentage ²	1.53	2.54	2.22	1.93
% (No.) of pupils on the SEN register	3.26	3.36	3.03	4.27
No. of pupils with statements of educational needs in the mainstream school	13	14	14	13
No. of newcomers	5	*	*	*

¹ ETI is trialling a range of methods for collecting the views of parents/carers about the life and work of the school. As a result, the response rate to the parent/carer questionnaires may be low.

² The term 'FSME Percentage' refers to the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals.

<i>Intake:</i>				
% of Y8 pupils with L5 English	92.1	85.7	95.8	50 ³
% of Y8 pupils with L5 Mathematics	92.8	95.7	98.6	35.9 ²
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in English	100	100	100	100 ²
% of Y8 pupils with L4 and above in mathematics	100	100	100	100 ²
<i>Source: data as held by the school.</i>				

* = fewer than 5

3. Focus of inspection

In order to promote improvement in the interests of all pupils, the purpose of the post-primary inspection is, through an effective linking of internal and external approaches, to:

- evaluate the quality of the provision and the outcomes for the pupils;
- evaluate the school's leadership and management and its capacity to effect and sustain improvement in its provision and standards; and
- to inform the school's planning for improvement.

4. Overall finding

Overall Performance Level	Outstanding
Achievements and Standards	Outstanding
Provision	Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Outstanding

5. Achievements and standards

- The pupils are well-motivated, articulate and have a very positive disposition to learning; their critical thinking, research skills and ability to synthesize information from a wide range of sources are developed well through their confident and mature engagement in learning. The pupils achieve in line with their ability, and through active participation in a wide range of well-planned enrichment pursuits and extra-curricular activities, they develop very effective social and personal skills, including leadership, teamwork, and mentoring, which prepare them well for the transition to the next stage of their education and adult life.

³ From 2013, KS2 standards in English and mathematics are reported as Levels of Progression in Communication and Using Mathematics and cannot be compared directly with KS2 data from previous years

- Over the past three years the percentage of pupils achieving seven GCSEs including English and mathematics, at grades A* to C has been five or more percentage points above the NI average for similar schools. At grades A*-B⁴ almost all of the subjects are well above the Northern Ireland average for similar schools.
- The percentage of pupils achieving three or more A levels at grades A* to C over the past three years has been ten or more percentage points above the NI average for similar schools.
- The pupils who require additional support with aspects of their learning attain very well at GCSE and A level in line with their peers. The excellent results reflect the consistently high expectations by both pupils and staff and the pupil-centred provision.

6. Provision

- The teachers plan well for learning and use pastoral and performance data effectively to inform their classroom practice and to sustain the high standards and uptake in STEM subjects, modern languages, mathematics and English. Consequently, the quality of almost all of the lessons observed was good or better, with two-thirds of the lessons being evaluated as very good or outstanding. In these highly effective lessons, the teachers used open-ended questioning to assess the extent to which learning was taking place; and pupil responses were built on adeptly by the teacher. The teachers convey enthusiasm about their specialist subjects and the work is set in contemporary contexts of interest to the pupils. During the lessons, the pupils benefit from excellent opportunities for discussing their learning using subject-specific terminology skilfully.
- A wide range of assessment data is used effectively at subject and whole-school level in order to set targets and monitor the pupils' progress individually across the curriculum to ensure they are reaching their full potential. Across the school, a high priority is given to setting homework which promotes learning. In the best practice, the marking provides useful guidance to the pupil on what needs to be done for the work to be improved and helps the pupils to set personal, practical targets to help raise the standard of their work.
- The head of department and the English teachers work collaboratively to provide effective support and guidance in literacy. Literacy is prioritised in the school development plan and the co-ordinator raises effectively the profile of literacy, with all subject departments required to demonstrate clear strategies for promoting effective written communication. Over the past three years, the pupils have achieved high standards in English. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-B in GCSE English and English Literature and A*-C in A level English Literature has been more than 10 percentage points above the Northern Ireland (NI) average.

⁴ See Appendix for data: note that when averages are compared, they are with the average for selective schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals.

- Effective curricular links exist between the key stage (KS) 3 mathematics co-ordinator and numeracy co-ordinators in local primary schools. Sharing of good practice has informed planning for mathematics at KS3. During mathematics lessons, the pupils work independently, offer answers willingly and confidently and achieve high standards in public examinations. The percentage of pupils gaining A*-B in GCSE mathematics and additional mathematics is more than 10 percentage points above the NI average, and the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C in A level mathematics is 5 percentage points above average.
- Pastoral care is highly effective; the pupils show respect for their school community and interact, with care and consideration, with their peers and with the adults who care for them. The pupils' views are sought out and acted upon; they are aware of their responsibility in ensuring their school is welcoming, friendly and inclusive. They take pride in their school, express their opinions maturely, and talk articulately about their activities and achievements. Working relationships at all levels are excellent and there is a common drive to reflect the school's caring and inclusive ethos. The pastoral care arrangements evidence the values inherent in the stated aims of the school, which are lived out daily by the school community. A culture of self-evaluation is well-embedded within the pastoral provision; there are consistent, manageable strategies for monitoring and evaluation leading to improvement.
- The pupils with special educational needs learn alongside their peers, and receive high quality well-focused support enabling them to overcome barriers to learning. Pupils at risk of marginalisation are supported well; effective systems promote their inclusion and participation in all aspects of school life.
- The holistic development of the pupils is reflected in the coherent pupil-centred careers provision, which complements and supports well the pupils' learning across the curriculum. The provision is flexible, forward-looking and responsive to the individual needs, interests and aspirations of the pupils. Regular and effective monitoring of the provision ensures the pupils have access to up-to-date information and make informed decisions in relation to subject choices and long-term career aspirations. The taught careers programme, combined with the extensive programme of visiting speakers, business links, careers conventions and work placement opportunities, both locally and in other countries, develops successfully the pupils' self-awareness and skills, including team work, self management, communication, problem-solving leadership and resilience.
- The pupils benefit from a socially inclusive, flexible, broad and balanced curriculum which is tailored well to meet the needs of individuals. They have access to a wide range of applied and vocational subjects which ensure appropriate progression opportunities. The school is meeting the requirements of the Entitlement Framework at KS 4 and has appropriate plans to develop further the post-16 curriculum through very good links with a neighbouring school and the local college of further education as part of the Lisburn Area Learning Community.

- A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment activities support well the pupils' physical, personal and social development. Opportunities to participate in mentoring and leadership courses supplement and enhance significantly the pupils' personal statements for application to third level education. The pupils make a positive contribution to the local and wider community by working in special schools, local primary schools and volunteering with charitable organisations. Such excellent opportunities prepare them well for success in life after school and in the workplace.

7. Leadership and management

- The school development plan⁵, associated action plans, and performance indicators are monitored and reviewed regularly and robustly. The key priorities for development are appropriate and improvement planning has a clear and consistent focus on the pastoral and academic work of the school.
- The highly effective leadership at all levels throughout the school is underpinned by a clear vision and a focus on providing for the holistic education of the pupils and their preparation for life beyond school. The senior leadership team (SLT) are highly committed to the academic and pastoral well-being of all the pupils; they are focused sharply on maintaining the very high academic standards achieved and providing every support for the pupils' social and emotional development. There is a collegial approach to whole school improvement; internal and external data is used effectively to evaluate and inform practice with a continuous programme of professional development of the teaching and support staff. The middle management team are well supported and motivated by the SLT to monitor and review the provision in order to ensure that it meet the needs, interests and aspirations of all pupils within the school community. Through the staff development programme and regular department meetings, there are appropriate opportunities for all staff to disseminate their effective practice.
- The governors have a very good understanding of the school performance data and play an appropriate role in the school development planning process. They are highly committed and provide an effective challenge function to the SLT and teachers in the school. The parents, staff and school community can therefore have a high degree of confidence in the effectiveness of both leadership and governance.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the Department of Education. In discussions with the inspectors, the pupils reported that they felt very secure in school and knew what to do if they had any concerns about their well-being.

8. Conclusion

In most of the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is outstanding; the quality of pastoral care is also outstanding. The school has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

⁵ The school development plan meets the requirements of the School Development Planning Regulations (NI) 2010.

Performance and statistical data

GCSE and equivalent examination results from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below compares the percentage of year 12 pupils in this school achieving 7 or more GCSEs (A* to C) and equivalent subjects with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category⁶. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals attaining five or more GCSE grades at A*-C are also provided.

GCSE and GCSE equivalent subjects - *following permitted exclusions	2011	2012	2013
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 taking GCSE & Equivalents in at least 7 subjects</i>	100	100	99.3
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects</i>	99.3	99.3	97.9
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	94.1	94.2	
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 7 subjects including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics</i>	99.3	98.6	97.9
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	93	92.6	
<i>*Percentage of Year 12 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 5 subjects</i>	100	100	99
Percentage of Year 12 entitled to free school meals achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* to C or equivalent (including GCSE English and GCSE Mathematics)	100	100	100

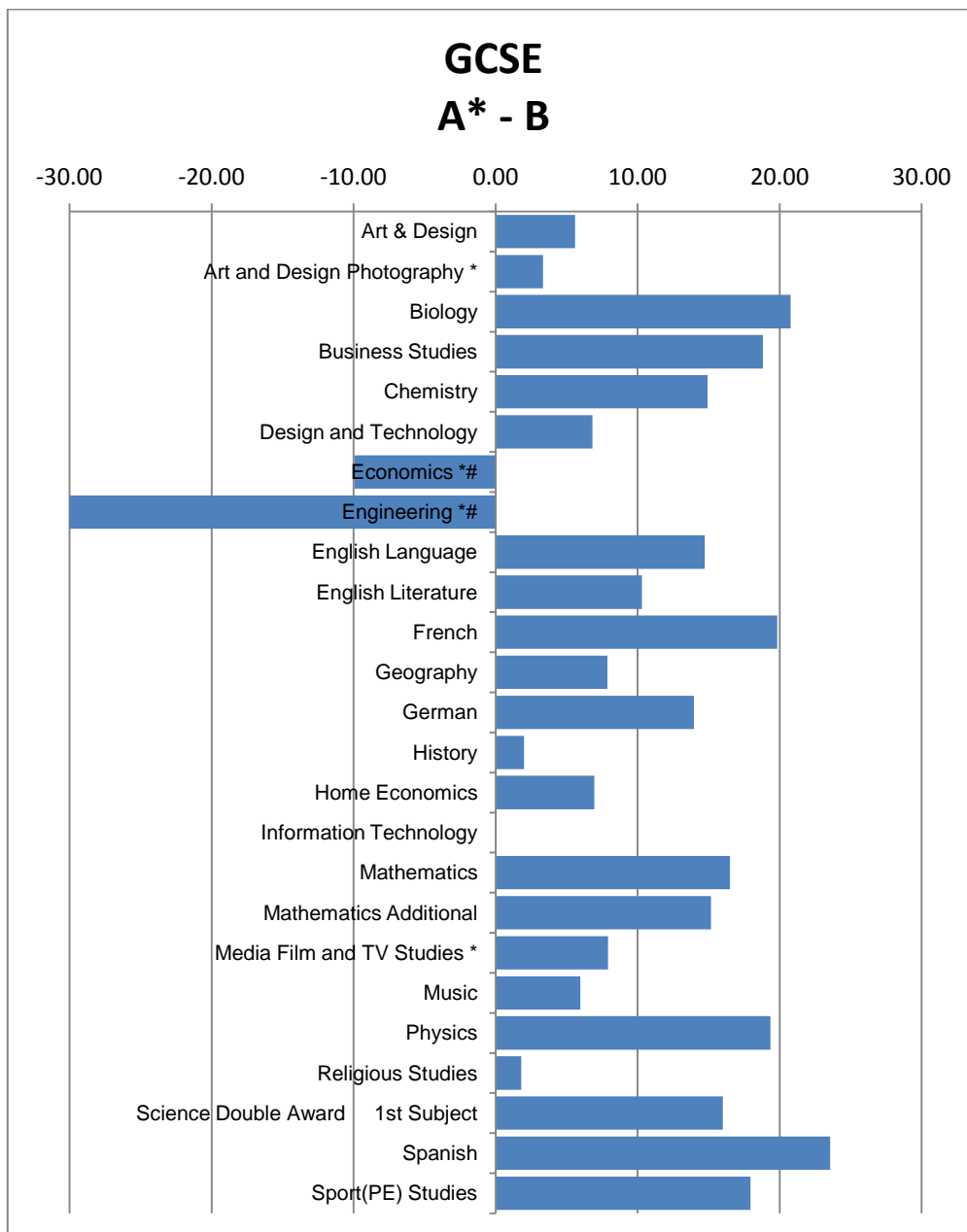
⁶ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCSE level at grades A* to B from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the average over three years of the percentage of pupils achieving at GCSE level at grades A* to B in individual subjects in this school is compared with the three-year NI average.

The comparison is shown below as the difference between these two values; a positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons should be treated with caution.

Comparison with the three-year NI average



*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

GCE A level examination results at grades A* to C from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of year 14 pupils in this school achieving three or more GCE A levels at grades A* to C. The table compares the percentage achieving three or more GCEs (A* to C) with the NI average for selective schools in the same free school meals category⁷.

GCE A Level or equivalent	2011	2012	2013
Percentage of Year 14 taking A2 levels & Equivalentents in at least 3 subjects	100	100	100
Percentage of Year 14 obtaining Grades C or above in at least 3 A2 levels	87.4	93.65	90.55
<i>The NI average for similar schools in the same free school meals category</i>	<i>77.5</i>	<i>75.5</i>	<i>75.5</i>

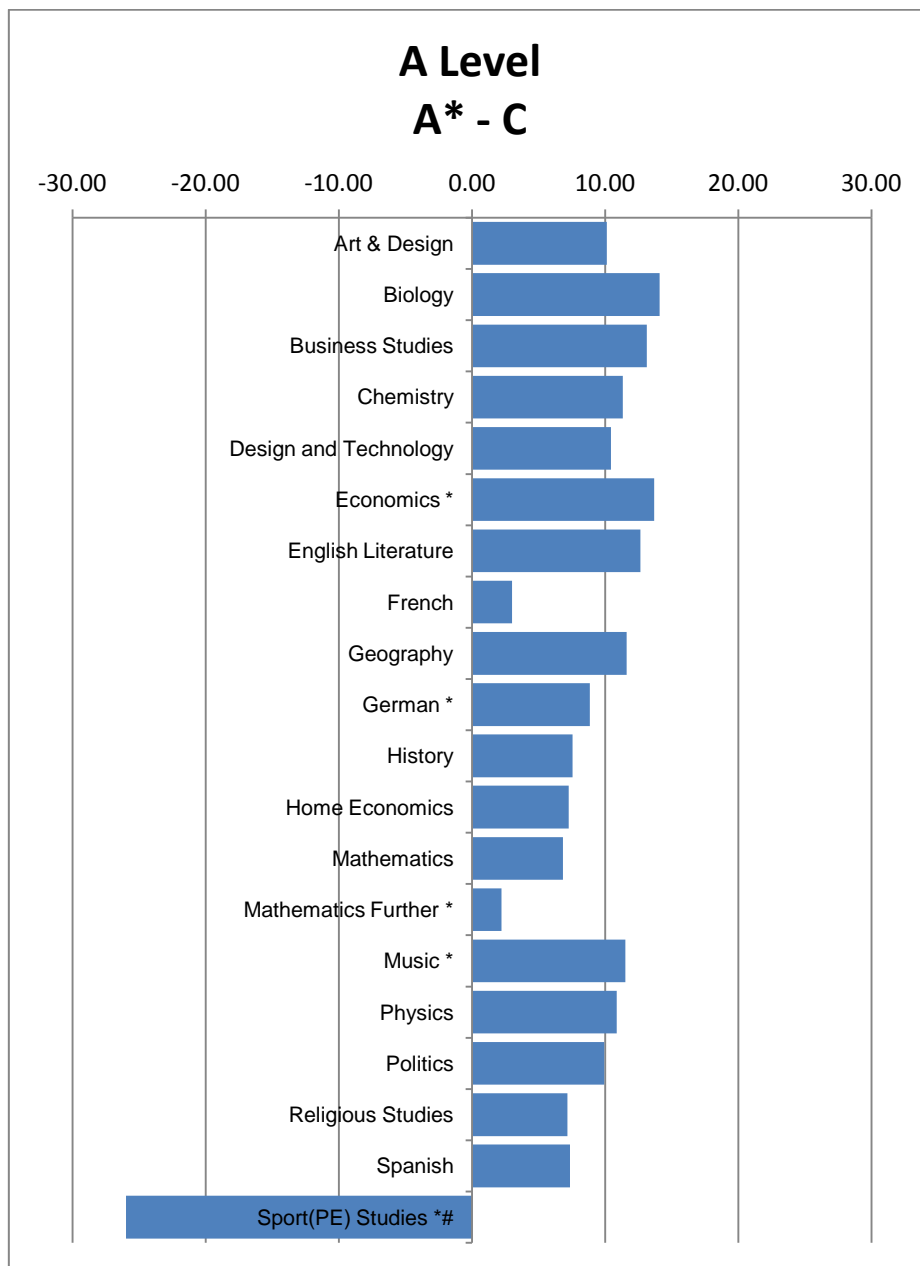
Source: Data as held and verified by the school, with DE benchmarks.

⁷ See benchmarking data and guidance contained in the annual DE Circulars on: 'School Development Planning and Target-Setting'.

Attainment of pupils in individual subjects at GCE A level at grades A* to C from 2010-11 to 2012-13

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the average over three years of the percentage of pupils achieving at GCE level at grades A* to C in individual subjects in this school is compared with the three-year NI average for selective schools.

The comparison is shown below as the difference between these two values; a positive value (to the right) shows that the average individual subject performance is above the NI average. The number of entries to each subject will vary considerably and therefore comparisons between subjects should be treated with caution.



*indicates fewer than 30 entries over 3 years

OTHER EXAMINATION RESULTS: POST-16

Other [level 3] courses taken in the last three years.

GCE Subject	2011	2012	2013	Total entry over 3 years
	% A*-C	% A*-C	% A*-C	
Information Technology (Vocational)	100	100	90	22
Moving Image Art	100	100	100	9
Science Electronics	N/A	N/A	100	5

STAYING-ON RATE (Percentage staying on from year 12 to 13 and from year 13 to 14)

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of the pupils who stay on at this school from year 12 to year 13 and then from year 13 to year 14, compared with the NI average for all schools and for the most recent year for which data is available.

	NI Average	School
% Yr 12 staying on to Yr 13	95	94.5
% Yr 13 staying on to Yr 14	94.9	98.5

LEAVERS' DESTINATIONS

Based on data held and verified by the school with ETI, the table below shows the percentage of all of the pupils from this school who leave school to enter further education, higher education or employment, or are seeking employment compared with the average for selective schools.

2011/12		
	School	NI
Total Number of Leavers	138	
Employment	0.7%	3.8%
Further Education	6.5%	19.0%
Higher Education	92.0%	72.7%
Training	0.7%	1.5%
Unemployed	0.0%	1.6%
Unknown	0.0%	1.4%

Health and safety

- During their next risk assessment exercise it would be prudent for the school to examine the numerous entrances to the school buildings.

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